

ENGLISH 585
The Great War and Cultural Memory: Literature, History and the Arts
Spring 2009, Humanities 3019
Tuesdays 3:50-6:40

Professor: Celia Marshik
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00-3:00 (in 1106) and Wednesdays 2-4 (in 2089)
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Course Description

World War I has been described as a particularly “literary” war because of the sheer volume of poetry and fiction it inspired. But the war also left its impact on music, the visual arts and nonfiction: the music hall, cinema, painters, photographers and historians all vied to record and interpret the events of 1914-1918. Those who took the war as their subject had to wrestle with numerous questions: how to represent death and destruction without unduly aestheticizing pain and trauma; how to attend to the experiences of individuals caught up in historical events that emphasized collectives (armies, workers, “the nation”); whether and how to confront the tensions created by class and gender at home and at the front; and how to present combat to audiences that had largely experienced the war from afar. This course will consider these questions and others as we assess the relationship between historical events and cultural production. We’ll also consider how the war’s meaning evolved over the course of the twentieth-century.

Required texts (available at Stony Books):

Pat Barker, *Regeneration*
Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*
Erich Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*
Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet: Stepdaughters of War*
George Walter, Editor, *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*
Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier*

Additional readings are available on-line through Blackboard

Films on reserve at the A.V. desk, Melville Library

The Great War and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century (PBS)
The Big Parade (Dir. King Vidor)
Shoulder Arms (Dir. Charles Chaplin)
All Quiet on the Western Front (Dir. Lewis Milestone)

COURSE ORGANIZATION AND REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance & Participation: Most people learn best by engaging in discussion rather than listening to a lecture. Although I will provide occasional short lectures to supplement your reading, most of the class will be spent in seminar-style discussion, and each student will give three presentations. This means that you need to be committed to regular attendance and engaged participation in class discussion. If you are a shy or reserved person, you should meet with me during the first few weeks of class. More than two absences will lower your participation grade; more than three will result in no credit for participation.

Blackboard (<http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu>): The Blackboard site for this class contains assigned readings as well as a discussion board, a place to post questions and comments that you would like to discuss in class. The class syllabus and all assignments will also be posted on Blackboard. In addition, the class site contains links to material that provides context for the class readings. If you have never logged in to Blackboard before, your password is your SOLAR ID number.

Writing Assignments: You will write two papers during the semester. In the first (five-page) paper, due in February or March (you choose the exact day), you will make an argument about one work. In the second (ten to fifteen-page) paper, due on May 13, you will write a research paper on a topic of your choice. I will provide you with detailed instructions for these papers in advance of the due dates. All papers must be typed (please use a standard 12 point font), double-spaced and stapled.

Presentations: Every student will give three ten-minute presentations during the semester. The first presentation should introduce the rest of the class to some historical, biographical or literary background for the reading or film we will discuss that day. For example, a student who signs up to give a presentation on the day we discuss *All Quiet on the Western Front* might choose to present background on Erich Maria Remarque, on the historical facts behind some event in the novel, on the reception of the book or some other issue. You should let me know what you plan to do in advance of your presentation, and if you are looking for ideas, I am happy to consult with you. In addition to this presentation, you will present and discuss one visual artifact (a poster, painting or photograph) during our class meeting on March 10, and you will give a brief overview of your final paper during our closing class meeting on May 5. I will provide additional details about these presentations in the weeks before they are scheduled. Presentations will receive a collective grade based on preparation and content.

Final Grade Calculation:

15%	Class Participation	20%	First Paper
20%	Presentations	45%	Second Paper

Academic Integrity: All written work must appropriately credit any electronic or printed sources. Plagiarism, using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information, is considered academic dishonesty and all instances will result in an F for the course. Citing all sources (use the MLA or Chicago system) and putting direct quotations in quotation marks are required.

DSS Assistance: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, Room 128 ECC Building, (631-632-6748). They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students requiring emergency evacuation in case of a fire are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professor and Disability Support Services.

Course Calendar

Readings are listed on the date we will discuss them. Items followed by an asterisk (*) are on Blackboard. Unless otherwise indicated, all poetry can be found in *The Penguin Book (TPB)*. The musical texts will be played in class as time allows; most recordings are also available through Blackboard. Scheduled readings are subject to change.

- 1/27 Introduction to the course and to each other
War poems & the cultures that produce them
Screening and discussion of *The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century*

Backgrounds to the Conflict

- 2/3 Cornwall, "The First World War"*
Keegan, "A European Tragedy"* & "The Crisis of 1914" (handout)
Eksteins, "Rites of War"*
Musical text: "The Boys of the Old Brigade"

Soldiers' Testimony

Reminder: First Paper due sometime in February or March

- 2/10 *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, Section 2, "Somewhere in France" (46-98) and "Blighters" (181), "They" (205)
Musical text: "Boys in Khaki, Boys in Blue"
- 2/17 *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, Section 3, "Action" (99-138) and "Dulce et decorum est" (141-2), "Dead Man's Dump" (146-8), "In Flanders Fields" (155)
Musical text: "Your King and Country Want You"
- 2/24 Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*

The War in/and Popular Culture

- 3/3 Screening and discussion of film of *All Quiet on the Western Front*
(Dir. Lewis Milestone. Universal, 1930)
Laura Marcus, “The Great War in Twentieth-Century Cinema”*
Theresa Hooley, “A War Film”; Sir Henry Newbolt, “The War Films” (TPB)
- 3/10 Visual Art (presentations and discussion)
Screening and discussion of Charlie Chaplin’s *Shoulder Arms*
(Dir. Charles Chaplin. First National Pictures, 1918)
Meg Albrinck, “Recruitment Posters and the Masculine Ideal”*
- 3/17 Screening and discussion of *The Big Parade*, (Dir. King Vidor. MGM, 1925)
Siegfried Sassoon, “Picture Show” (TPB)
Michael Isenberg, “The Great War Viewed from the Twenties”*
Leslie DeBauche, “The United States’ Film Industry and WWI” *

Women at the Front and at Home

- 3/24 West, *Return of the Soldier*
Brittain, “Camberwell versus Death”*
May Wedderburn Cannan, “Lamplight” (TBP)
Musical text: “Roses of Picardy”
- 3/31 Smith, *Not so Quiet*
Musical text: “Just Before the Battle”
- 4/14 Hemingway, *Farewell to Arms*

Wartime Ironies and Atrocities

- 4/21 Hanley, “The German Prisoner”*
Kipling, “Mary Postgate”*
La Motte, “A Surgical Triumph” & “Women and Wives”*
Cummings, “I Sing of Olaf”*

Wrapping Up: The Great War in Retrospect

- 4/28 Barker, *Regeneration*
- 5/5 Siegfried Sassoon, “On Passing the New Menin Gate”*, Edmund Blunden, “The Midnight Skaters” (TPB); Ted Hughes, “Six Young Men”*, Philip Larkin, “MCMXIV”*, Seamus Heaney, “In Memoriam”*
Presentations of final papers

Wednesday, May 13— Final Papers due in my office or department mailbox by 4pm